



Kaija Heitland – Indigenous Nouveau

Artist's statement, Biography and Expanded CV



TAANISII KIYAWOW! KAIJA HEITLAND DINISHIIKASHOON. AEN MICHIF NIYA, VANCOUVER ISLAND DOOSHCHIIN.

My name is Kaija Heitland and I am a Métis woman living on Vancouver Island, on the traditional lands of the Cowichan tribes. I belong to the Cowichan Valley Métis Community, though am originally from Northern Ontario. The Métis side of my family comes from the Hodgson and Denault lines. My other lineage is Sami, Scandinavian and German. I have been professionally doing graphic design for 10 years, tattooing for over 15, as well as a lifetime pursuing my traditional skills in beadwork and quillwork and the connections that they have to land-based practices. I am also a silversmith and I focus on using teeth and claws, by-products of Indigenous Hunting traditions, to create one-of-a-kind totemic pieces for my clients while highlighting the need for Indigenous voices in the dialogue for conservation and wildlife management and Indigenous food sovereignty.

In all my work, I focus on the need to reconnect to our traditional arts as a method for self-reclamation and strengthening our community bonds. These investigations into ourselves are essential to the preservation and evolution of Metis art and I focus on many different avenues including fabric, ceremonial items, moccasins, jewellery and regalia. I explore animal symbolism, plant medicine, and traditional food plants in my work, as these designs are an important part of our rich Métis culture of storytelling, and the story of our place in the culture of Indigenous British Columbia.

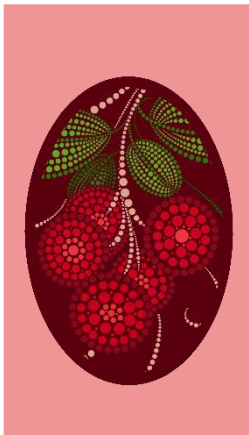
I began my company, Indigenous Nouveau, as a platform to help to facilitate a greater visibility for my community and the Métis who reside in British Columbia, to showcase our unique beadwork and quillwork patterns, arts culture and history. We are experiencing a renaissance in both our appreciation and our approach to our traditional arts and I find that truly exciting. We, as a culture, are waking up and feeling our strength and vitality and it is wonderful to see that expressed in the art and music being created presently.

In the past few years, I feel as though I have found my true calling in education, sharing and in arts communication. Currently, my main focus has been teaching traditional land-based arts, giving instruction on beadwork, quillwork and the teachings of the Ribbon Skirt and how to incorporate these teachings into our daily paths, as tools for negating lateral violence and our own personal Reclamation.

Ki'nanaskou mitinowow!

Maarsii,

Kaija



Kaija Heitland

Indigenous Nouveau

Biography

As a Métis artist, I am a practitioner of both beadwork and quillwork, adapting heritage methods and traditional techniques to reflect my diverse background, honouring both my Métis and Scandinavian ancestry. I make moccasins, ribbon skirts, tobacco pouches and regalia with both a community and international clientele.

I run my own business Indigenous Nouveau, which I started in 2019, with the intention of phasing entirely into working full time as a professional bead worker which I have now done. I am the sole proprietor of my business, having designed my own website, logos, stickers, run all my own e-commerce and financials, as well as website maintenance and customer service.

I dye, process and sell sustainably harvested porcupine quills which I both hand-dye with natural, foraged dyes and commercial dyes for other artists to be able to create with as well as providing land-based practice knowledge for sustainable harvesting, traditions and protocol surrounding the materials.

I design non-denominational Indigenous beadwork print fabrics for artists across turtle island. It has always been my intention to make my designs accessible to all peoples, both Indigenous and otherwise. We all share so much in common in our traditions and histories that I believe that it is important to be completely inclusive of all Turtle Island Nations in my design work, without the dilution of pan-Indigeneity. All my fabrics are produced in North America from organic cotton and organic hemp, Printed in Canada with eco-friendly inks and ecological and sustainable practices.

I currently print and sell clothing that I have designed exclusively. I have worked extensively to make sure that every piece of clothing is completely designed, manufactured and printed in Canada with North American made materials. I truly believe in supporting our own local businesses and industry before outsourcing to reduce costs. This ethic is reflected in the quality of products that I sell.

I am entirely self educated in marketing and e-commerce, having taken online classes, seminars and workshops to further my abilities to support myself and my family through the traditional arts.

Expanded/descriptive CV:

I am currently teaching a series of Porcupine-quillwork workshops through Cowichan Valley Metis Nation, to which I belong, and providing all necessary kits and materials to each participant. I have designed and self-published 3 education PDFs of beadwork technique, quillwork technique and moccasin sewing, complete with contributions from elders and respect and attention to protocol for sharing teachings. I share collected stories on porcupine lore from many nations, and my own experiences harvesting quills and the ethics surrounding the collection of natural materials.

I gave a workshop very recently through MNBC on Indigenous Entrepreneurship and the importance of retaining Indigenous values in the face of capitalism and holistic business building. This project has morphed into my designing and writing a 10-lesson course on the subject, from branding and social media

to photography and developing healthy work habits based on my own experience of building arts-based businesses over the past 15 years.

I have recently participated in a series of artist talks regarding Reclamation and Reconciliation, hosted by the Arts Council of New Westminster which was also recently featured on SHAW Multicultural Channel. I was one of 5 Indigenous Artists asked to participate as knowledge keepers. This featured my ongoing mission to use art as a mediator for our own individual Reclamation and self awareness as Indigenous individuals. I was also the featured artist for HOOP Magazine's April 2021 (issue 99) Featured Artist, where I spoke about the initial success of Indigenous Nouveau and my work for the Reclamation and Reconciliation Project I participated in.

<https://www.newwestcity.ca/calendar-of-events/events/6466.php>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjguH3qsFq8>

I was also fortunate enough in January 2021 to be the featured artist for SAD Magazine's (Stories. Art.Design) Death issue. I put together a video, interview and photographs of my work, highlighting the in-depth work I do with my jewellery process, and educating on Indigenous Food sovereignty and highlighting the need to keep Indigenous peoples in the broader conversation about sustainability and conservation, adding the unique vision of conservation from an Indigenous perspective on life cycles and use of animals. <https://www.sadmag.ca/blog/2021/1/16/meet-january-artist-of-the-month-kaija-heitland>

This summer, I was honoured to be asked to design and execute a mural for the Chief Dan George School in Abbotsford, featuring indigenous plants in my own Métis beadwork style. We used teachings from Christi Belcourt's book to select Plants sacred to the nations of British Columbia to compliment their Native Plants Garden planted at the school, and I oversaw the painting and layout of the mural while encouraging both teachers and all students to participate, though focusing on Indigenous students and those students in the enrichment and alternative classes to give them a creative outlet outside of the classroom.

One of the projects I was particular proud to participate in was to illustrate the "Introduction to Jigging; The Métis Dance", which was an educational print resource for ISPARC (Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Council) and had province-wide distribution in schools for their Physical Education Programs. I worked with ISPARC to create illustrations to demonstrate the different metis jog steps and a series of colouring page books for the supplemental print portion for classroom work, highlighting the beautiful beadwork designs of the Metis Tradition. These are available for public use through: <https://schoolpapl.ca/indigenous-resources/>

I was recently feature on CBC Radio's "North by Northwest" hosted by Sheryl McKay, speaking about my upcoming project "Teachings of the Ribbon Skirt", a interactive and province-wide art project aimed at educating on the origins and teachings of the ribbon skirt as a tool for negating lateral violence between First Nations, Indigenous, Métis and non Indigenous by recognizing the collective origins of some of the most iconographic regalia shared by all our individual groups. We will be providing instruction and kits to make a ribbon skirt to 100 disadvantaged or isolated members of the Métis community, as well as a PDF of my research on the historical context of the Ribbon Skirt. This project is funded by the Naakatchihtow Arts Grant project through MNBC, Métis Nation British Columbia. The interview can be found here: <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-43-north-by-northwest/clip/15884856-sunday-december-12> (My interview starts at 30:45.)

This Fall, I was selected as Canada Post's Runner up for their "Tales of Triumph" Canada-wide competition, highlighting the success of small businesses contributing to doing good and giving back to their communities. This is an ongoing promotional prize where Canada Post highlights and discusses my business as an inspiration to other small businesses struggling to connect with their communities in a time of isolation.

<https://www.canadapost-postescanada.ca/cpc/en/business/marketing/campaign/tales-of-triumph/details/2021-winners.page>

Tattoo work:

I have a significant business background, having started three successful art-based businesses so far, all sole-proprietor ships and all independent of outside funding, but the core of my business experience has been in the tattoo arts and graphic design industry.

I am an independent contracted Tattoo-artist and have owned and operated my own business for 15 years, domestically and internationally, attending conventions, conferences and winning numerous awards for my merit, competitions and contributions to the tattoo community. I have previously, and will in the future, teach online seminars on tattoo technique, structure and flow and am part of an online collective providing paid online critiques for developing tattoo artists. I have a healthy print business online, selling my own work in Europe and in North America which is all printed here in Vancouver using ecologically sound methods and recycled paper.

Through my tattoo business I also do independent logo, sticker and clothing design as well as website management and design, for myself and other clients and have a very diverse digital portfolio available upon request. I am currently a resident tattoo artist of 10 years at Sacred Heart Tattoo, one of the oldest tattoo shops in Vancouver.

www.Instagram.com/Kaija.heitland.tattoos

Silversmithing:

My jewelry company, By the Thorne, is another educational platform for me to provide information on Métis and First-Nation's history, and modern lifestyle. I provide information on Indigenous food sovereignty and the importance of supporting hunting and fishing rights for Indigenous peoples and their role in climate change and sustainability. I combine natural materials such as teeth, bones, claws and porcupine quills to create an indigenous/silversmithing fusion that is unique in my industry. I work with a local silver casting business to cast all my talon and claws and provide information on all the individual animals the claws come from, ensuring a connection between the client and my work.

I have been silversmithing part time for 17 years, having conducted many classes in private and public, on metallurgy and an introduction to the techniques of jewellery making.

www.instagram.com/bythethorne

I have also started a sister company, Of the Farm and Field, with the goal of eventually producing a cookbook based on Indigenous wild-crafted, hunted and foraged ingredients. It is a compendium of stories, ingredient photography and anecdotes of me having lived a rural farm life and my experiences raising animals, hunting, and fishing, accompanied with recipes that underline all our connections with the land and sea. There is also a traditional element to this book, instructing on the ethics and implications of harvesting from the wild and our sensitive relationships with sustainability and respect for nature. I hope to self-publish within the next year.

www.instagram.com/ofthefarmandfield